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**NOTES FOR A TALK BY PETER G. WHITE,
SPECIAL ASSISTANT, APPOINTMENTS, TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA,
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It is easy for Progressive Conservatives to forget, now that we are in government, that we must always keep at least one eye cocked on the electoral process and the next election, and on the next election after that. If we do not win elections, we do not stay in government; and it is a very big mistake for the party to get so fascinated with the administration of the government that we forget our political role, which is fundamentally to win elections.

There have been 33 federal elections since Confederation, of which 18 have been won by the Liberal Party. One might therefore think that Tories have won 15; well in fact we have not, because after the election of 1925, although we won more seats under Meighen than any other party, Mackenzie King, wily politician that he was, hung on to the government, so we cannot really count that as having won the election. There was a hung jury in 1925, so the Conservatives since Confederation have won only 14 elections.

Of those 14 elections, six were won by Sir John A. Macdonald, who won all but one of the seven elections he fought. That means that since Sir John A., we have won a grand total of eight elections; since the election of 1891, Macdonald's last, we have won only eight elections in 93 years.

Sir Robert Borden won two of the eight. He did not win his first one until he had lost two, by the way. Borden was chosen party leader in 1901, after Tupper had lost the election of 1900, and Borden lost the elections of 1904 and 1908. In those days our party was much more charitable towards its leaders, so Borden stayed on to win the election of 1911 and also that of 1917. The next Conservative victory was under R.B. Bennett, who won the election of 1930, making three. We did not have another winner until John Diefenbaker, 27 years later. Diefenbaker won three elections; 1957, 1958 and 1962; then Joe Clark won one in 1979, and then Brian Mulroney won in 1984. That makes the grand total of eight.

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Why was Macdonald so much more successful than subsequent Conservative leaders? My thesis is that Macdonald won six out of seven elections largely because he did well in the Province of Quebec. In the first six elections after Confederation, up to the election of 1887, Macdonald never won fewer than 30 seats in Quebec, and in those days there were only 65 seats in that province. The only election Macdonald lost nationally was of course the Pacific Scandal election of 1874, and even then he held 30 seats in Quebec. The total number of Quebec seats that Macdonald won election by election is very interesting, particularly since there were 10 fewer seats in Quebec than there are today: 1867, 47 seats; 1872, 38 seats; 1874, 30 seats (that was the Pacific Scandal election); 1878, 47 seats again; 1882, 51 seats (his best result) and 1887, 33 seats. I will deal with Macdonald's last election in 1891 below.

Louis Riel was hanged in 1885. Who won more seats in Quebec in the next election in 1887, the Tories or the Liberals? Macdonald won 33 seats and the Liberals won 32 seats. Macdonald carried Quebec by one seat, only two years after the hanging of Riel. So there is a myth exploded: it is not because (or at least solely because) Macdonald hanged Riel that we have not historically (or at least not in recent history) done well in Quebec.

But a major event did occur in Quebec's and Canada's political history following the 1887 election, one that would tip the electoral balance of power in Canada from the Conservatives to the Liberals for almost a century: that event was that Wilfrid Laurier was chosen leader of the Liberal Party in the summer of 1887 - the first French-speaking Quebecer ever to lead a national party. He fought only one election against Macdonald, in 1891. Macdonald won the election nationally, but Laurier won fairly handily in Quebec, 37 seats to 28 seats. Laurier had always predicted that the Liberals would never win a national election while Macdonald lived, and he was right, but he did at least carry Quebec against Macdonald in 1891.

From 1891 on, Quebec election statistics are quite startling, given the previous excellent record of Macdonald in Quebec. The Conservatives never again won as many seats in Quebec as Macdonald's high water mark in 1882 (51 out of 65), until 1984 (58 out of 75). For over 90 years we never even matched Macdonald's minimum of 28 Quebec seats in 1891, except for the general election of 1958, which was an anomaly, as I will argue

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later. During that same period, again excepting 1958, the Liberals never won fewer than 35 seats in Quebec. Indeed, in one election (1921) they won every single seat in Quebec. In my view it is absolutely clear that the Liberal domination of Quebec is the main reason why, of the 26 elections since 1896 when Laurier won his first national election, the Liberals have won 17 elections and the Conservatives only eight. Taking only the 50 years since 1935, the Liberals have been in office for 42 of the 50 years and the Conservatives for only eight, again because of the Liberal domination of Quebec.

To go back to Confederation again, why was it that the Conservative Party by and large was able to carry Quebec? First because of George Etienne Cartier and later his successors. Cartier actually died following the election of 1872, which was fairly soon after Confederation, but there were always strong Quebec Conservative leaders whom Quebec voters could identify with and vote for, as they by and large did even after Cartier's death. There were Hector Langevin, J.A. Chapleau and Adolphe Caron, and there was also the notorious Joseph Israel Tarte. Tarte started off as a Conservative organizer and propagandist, and won several elections for Macdonald by delivering a majority of Quebec seats under Chapleau, Langevin, Caron and others. After 1891, Tarte switched to supporting Laurier and he helped Laurier win two elections in Quebec. Then in 1902 when Laurier was in Europe, Tarte who was at that time Minister of Public Works, decided that Laurier was getting old and tired and was soon going to quit, and Tarte made some speeches totally against government policy. For his pains, he was fired two days after Laurier got back to the country, and that was the end of Tarte's influence. But he had virtually dominated Quebec electoral politics for about six elections, first as a Conservative, then as a Liberal.

After the election of Laurier as Liberal leader in 1887, the Conservative Party began to decline in Quebec. Sir John A. died a couple of months after the election of 1891, and the Conservatives then had a succession of undistinguished leaders. The first one, it was true, was from Quebec, Sir John Abbott, but he was not bilingual and he was in the Senate. He did not last very long, and then we had Thompson, Bowell and Tupper. None of these men was able to keep Quebec Conservative against Laurier.

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Laurier successively over the next four elections raised his Quebec totals from the 37 seats that he won in 1896 to 49 in the 1900 election and then 57 in 1904 and 53 in 1908. Even when Laurier lost nationally, as in 1911, he still won 38 of the 65 seats in Quebec; and in 1917 which was the Conscription election, Borden carried virtually the entire country but he only won three English-speaking seats in Quebec. Quebec voted massively for Laurier in that election, 62 seats. Since Laurier, the Liberals have won nearly all the seats in Quebec in nearly every election, and as I said earlier the only major exception before 1984 was the Diefenbaker landslide of 1958.

Given a strong federal party leader from Quebec with whom Quebecers can identify, they have invariably voted strongly for that person, in the absence of a strong opponent of the same type from another party. They voted for Cartier, they voted for Langevin, they voted for Chapleau, all Conservatives. But when after 1890, the Conservatives failed to offer them a strong Quebec leader, and Laurier became the first national French-speaking Quebec leader of a national party, Quebecers switched very quickly to Laurier and voted massively for him. King was able to keep that vote largely thanks to the stupidity of the Conservatives over the 1917 Conscription election. That election was without any question at all a major watershed in Quebec electoral politics. In the following election of 1921, Meighen, who was the Conservative leader, was so reviled and detested in Quebec that he could not get a single major candidate to stand for him. He ran almost a full slate, but they were all nonentities. King did not campaign in Quebec at all in 1921, yet he won every single seat because Meighen was so vilified as having been the author of the Conscription Bill when he was Minister of Justice in the Borden wartime government. King was able to ride that wave of Quebec support successfully throughout his whole career. The only time he had any difficulty at all was in the election of 1930 which was won by Bennett, but in Quebec in that election King still won 40 seats as against Bennett's 24.

The next major change in the leadership situation, while the Conservatives still failed to attract any serious Quebec leader to their banner, was of course when King retired and St-Laurent succeeded him in 1948. Naturally Quebec supported St-Laurent, this time with perhaps somewhat more enthusiasm than they had supported King throughout all his elections. The Conservatives

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tried everything. They tried an alliance with Duplessis, who was the Leader of the Union Nationale Government of Quebec during part of the St-Laurent regime, when Drew was the federal Conservative leader. The Drew-Duplessis Alliance was supposed to be the thing that would break the Liberal stronghold in Quebec; of course it did not work. St-Laurent won Quebec massively in every one of his elections.

This brings us to the interesting election of 1957. The new Conservative leader was Diefenbaker, and the Liberal leader was St-Laurent -- Uncle Louis -- who had been Prime Minister for nine years. The Conservatives won the election with a minority nationally; but in Quebec against St-Laurent, Diefenbaker won only nine out of seventy-five seats.

Between the elections of 1957 and 1958, there were only a few months, but a significant event again in the Quebec context happened, namely that St-Laurent retired as Liberal leader and was replaced by Lester Pearson, an anglophone from Ontario. There followed the election of 1958. From a Quebec voter's point of view, it was no longer a contest between a Quebec leader and a non-Quebec leader, but between two non-Quebecers. So Quebecers had no strong reason for remaining with the Liberal party because it was not led by one of their own any longer. The result was a massive upset, as Diefenbaker won 50 seats in Quebec in 1958 and the Liberals won the other 25, their lowest total since 1882.

Four years later, in the election of 1962, Diefenbaker was still Prime Minister and Pearson was still Leader of the Opposition. But there was a new factor in the Quebec political equation in 1962, in the person of Réal Caouette. Nobody had heard of him in 1958, only four years earlier. He had taken over a virtually unknown party that had been a laughing-stock in Quebec for years, "les Créditistes", or "les Bérets Blancs" and he had bought time on local television every Sunday evening at suppertime from 1960 to 1962. To the general astonishment, in the 1962 election Caouette won 26 seats in Quebec, going from nowhere to 26 seats in only two years. Diefenbaker's Conservatives fell from 50 Quebec seats in 1958, to only 14 in 1962, largely because of Caouette. Caouette, a French-Canadian party leader -- he was not a leader of one of the major parties, but he was the only francophone national party leader -- persuaded enough largely rural Quebecers to vote for him so that he was able to deprive Diefenbaker of his Quebec majority and put Diefenbaker into a minority position nationally once again, as St-Laurent had done before him.

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In 1963, shortly thereafter, there was a defence crisis, several resignations from Diefenbaker's cabinet, and Diefenbaker was defeated in the House of Commons, losing the ensuing election to Pearson. In 1963 Caouette was still the only French-Canadian leader on the scene, and also again in 1965, although he held on to fewer Quebec seats (20 in 1963 and 9 in 1965). Those elections produced the two Pearson minority governments. Pearson never did win a majority, partly because of Caouette. Diefenbaker and Pearson fought each other to a virtual stand-off in the rest of the country, but because Caouette had that sizeable block of Quebec seats (and, of course, there were some NDP seats outside Quebec) neither party could win a majority.

In 1967, we have another change in leadership. In that year, Robert Stanfield was elected leader of the Conservative Party, causing great euphoria among Conservatives, who thought they could finally make a break-through in Quebec. Stanfield was popular among Quebecers. He was a man who understood Quebec. He had received substantial support from Quebec at the leadership convention. But then, before the next election, the Liberals also changed leaders. Pearson resigned and Pierre Elliott Trudeau was selected leader of the Liberal Party in 1968.

With Trudeau, Quebecers once again had the option of supporting a Quebec leader of a national party for the first time in 11 years. The Liberals at that time, of course, were the only major party that had ever had a national leader from Quebec. So in the election of 1968, Quebec gave 56 seats to Trudeau, although enough Quebecers remained loyal to Caouette to give him 14 seats, leaving only 4 Quebec seats for Stanfield. (Interestingly enough, Caouette's strength in 1968 permitted Mulroney in 1984 to edge Trudeau out for the record of most Quebec seats won in his first election as leader -- 58 seats for Mulroney in 1984 as against 56 for Trudeau in 1968 -- although both trailed St-Laurent's 68 Quebec seats in 1949.)

Quebec's federal electoral history appears to demonstrate very clearly that if you give Quebecers the option of voting for a Québécois national leader of one major party and if the alternative is a non-Québécois national leader of the other major party, then Quebecers will vote for the Québécois. I call this proposition White's Law of Canadian Elections.

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I remember living in Quebec in the 1960s and early 1970s. If you were trying to follow national politics on French television or French radio you would hear Diefenbaker struggling with the language. If you were English you could probably understand Diefenbaker's French better than if you were French. Then Stanfield tried manfully but was not very much better. If you had the choice of listening to Réal Caouette with his entertaining supper-time blackboard display, or trying to understand Diefenbaker's or Stanfield's French, what channel would you switch to? That's exactly what Quebecers did.

The lesson is clear and it carries a very important message for Conservatives: we must not repeat the experience of Diefenbaker between 1958 and 1962, when Diefenbaker elected 50 Quebec MPs in 1958 and found himself reduced to 14 only four years later, thereby losing his majority.

As I said earlier, the 1958 election was an anomaly. There has never been an election like it in Canada, and in particular, 1984 was not like 1958. There were three things that happened in 1958 that made it unusual: first, there was no French-Canadian leader for Quebecers to vote for, no Québécois leader; secondly, Quebecers, who could read the newspapers as well as anyone else, knew perfectly well that Diefenbaker was going to win a landslide in the rest of the country, so why shouldn't they get on the bandwagon; and the third factor was that Maurice Duplessis, who was still premier of Quebec in 1958 and who was a patient man, took that occasion to wreak his revenge on the federal Liberals for the years of insults that they had inflicted on him. They had even defeated him as premier of Quebec in 1939 when they sent Ernest Lapointe and Chubby Power to steal the election from him, as he saw it. So he bided his time, and in 1958, unlike 1957, he put the entire resources of the Union Nationale at Diefenbaker's disposal. He personally identified the 50 seats that he thought the Conservatives could win. He hand-picked most of the candidates and he put the fabled Caisse électorale of the Union Nationale at Diefenbaker's disposal as well, so that 1958 was largely a Duplessis victory in Quebec. To that extent, one might say that there was a French-Canadian participant in the 1958 election, although he was not a federal party leader.

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I can imagine residents of Ontario or Westerners or Atlantic Canadians scowling at this analysis of Canadian political history. Once after hearing it, a young lady from Edmonton came up to me and asked if I meant that nobody from Alberta could ever become Prime Minister of Canada. I said I did not mean that at all, but what I did mean was that if anybody from Alberta or anywhere else in this country wants to be Prime Minister then he or she (I hope she) has got to be very functional indeed in both official languages; and if she happens to come from Alberta she can go to law school at Laval University for example and learn to speak French and learn to understand Quebec and perhaps even work in Quebec for a time. The message is obviously that to understand this country you really have to get to know it in both languages and both cultures -- indeed in all its cultures -- and I don't think it's unfair to expect that anybody who aspires to be Prime Minister of Canada should make the effort of doing that.